

## FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

### CONSTRUCTION OF AN ARMED FORCES RESERVE CENTER AND IMPLEMENTATION OF BRAC 05 REALIGNMENT ACTIONS IN THE VICINITY OF THE PEASE AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

On September 8, 2005, the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission (“BRAC Commission”) recommended that certain realignment actions occur adjacent to the Pease Air National Guard Base, New Hampshire. These recommendations were approved by the President on September 23, 2005, and forwarded to Congress. Congress did not alter any of the BRAC Commission’s recommendations, and on November 9, 2005, the recommendations became law. The BRAC Commission’s recommendations must now be implemented as provided for in the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-510), as amended.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District, has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) which identifies, documents, and evaluates the environmental effects of the BRAC Commission’s recommended realignment of functions adjacent to the Pease Air National Guard Base, as modified by Public Law 111-84. The EA has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.) and implementing regulations issued by the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)<sup>1</sup> and Environmental Analysis of Army Actions, 32 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 651. The 2006 Base Realignment Closure Manual for Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act was used for guidance in preparing the EA. The purpose of the EA is to inform decision makers and the public of the likely environmental consequences of the Proposed Action and alternatives.

#### 1.0 PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is to implement the BRAC Commission’s recommendations, as mandated by BRAC law, Public Law 101-510, by acquiring land and constructing new facilities to accommodate the personnel and functions of organizations realigning and relocating to a site in the vicinity of the Pease Air National Guard Base.

The BRAC Commission’s recommendations are:

- Close Paul Doble Army Reserve Center in Portsmouth, NH, and relocate units to a new Armed Forces Reserve Center and associated training and maintenance facilities adjacent to Pease Air National Guard Base, NH, if the Army is able to acquire suitable land for the construction of the facilities. The new AFRC and complex will have the capability to accommodate New Hampshire National Guard units from the following New Hampshire ARNG Armories: Rochester, Portsmouth, Somersworth and Dover, NH, if the state decides to relocate those National Guard units.

In April 2009, land proposed for acquisition and construction of the Armed Forces Reserve Center (AFRC) adjacent to the Pease Air National Guard Base was no longer available to the Government. In Public Law No: 111-84, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, language was subsequently adopted to revise the BRAC recommendations as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508.

- The Secretary of the Army may use funds appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations in section 2703 of the Military Construction Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (division B of Public Law 110-417; 122 Stat. 4715) for the purpose of constructing an Armed Forces Reserve Center at Pease Air National Guard Base, New Hampshire, to construct instead an Armed Forces Reserve Center in the vicinity of Pease Air National Guard Base at a location determined by the Secretary to be in the best interest of national security and in the public interest.

To implement the modified recommendations, the following new facilities are proposed for construction:

***Armed Forces Reserve Center and Supporting Facilities.*** The proposed AFRC would provide an approximately 20,883-square-foot (ft<sup>2</sup>) training facility with administrative, educational, assembly, library, learning center, vault, weapons simulator, and physical fitness areas for two U.S. Army Reserve units. Associated support facilities include an approximately 610-ft<sup>2</sup> unheated storage building, an approximately 12,000-ft<sup>2</sup> stormwater management basin, two approximately 1,260-ft<sup>2</sup> water tanks, a fire pump on an approximately 200-ft<sup>2</sup> pad, and an electric transformer on an approximately 75-ft<sup>2</sup> pad. In addition, there would be approximately 2,325 square yards of paved areas, including 1,400 square yards of military equipment parking (MEP) areas and 925 square yards of privately owned vehicle (POV) and handicapped parking areas, walkways, and access roads.

Supporting improvements proposed to complement the AFRC and associated facilities include land clearing, paving, fencing, the extension of utilities to service the project, and general site improvements. Access for the disabled would also be provided. Physical security measures, including maximum standoff distance from roads, parking areas, and vehicle unloading areas, would be incorporated into the facility designs and siting. Berms, heavy landscaping, and bollards would be used to prevent access when standoff distances cannot be maintained.

***Personnel.*** The Proposed Action would result in the assignment of approximately 90 personnel to the new AFRC, 87 of whom are reservists and part-time soldiers and 3 of whom are full-time personnel. The units typically would train on different weekends during the month. Two units would be realigned. All personnel who would be assigned to the new AFRC are currently assigned to the Paul A. Doble Army Reserve Center and there would be no relocation of personnel.

***Vehicles.*** The realignment of reserve units to the proposed AFRC would bring associated unit vehicles, equipment, and materials. The total number of vehicles that would relocate to the new AFRC in the vicinity of the Pease Air National Guard Base is projected to be approximately 22, including 1 wheeled vehicle and 21 trailers.

## **2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

CEQ regulations require inclusion of the No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative serves as a baseline against which the impacts of the Proposed Action and other alternatives can be evaluated. Under the No Action Alternative, the U.S. Army would not implement the Proposed Action. U.S. Army Reserve units would continue to train at and operate from their current location with current facilities that are outdated, inadequate, and inefficient. However, routine replacement or renovation actions could occur through normal military maintenance and construction procedures as circumstances independently warrant. The No Action Alternative is evaluated in detail in this EA to provide the baseline prescribed by CEQ regulations.

The U.S. Army considered and analyzed three alternatives, the Preferred Alternative – Portsmouth, Alternative 1 – Rye, and Alternative 2 – Exeter. Under the Preferred Alternative, the U.S. Army would

construct the AFRC facilities described in the Proposed Action on an approximately 10.6-acre<sup>2</sup> parcel of land located at 1900 Lafayette Road in Portsmouth, NH. Under Alternative 1, the U.S. Army would construct the AFRC facilities described in the Proposed Action on an approximately 16-acre parcel of land located at 295, 311, and 355 Lafayette Road in Portsmouth, NH. Under Alternative 2, the U.S. Army would construct the AFRC facilities described in the Proposed Action on an approximately 21-acre parcel of land located at 22 Continental Drive in Exeter, NH.

Other alternatives were considered, but not analyzed in the EA. These included seven other new construction sites located within 15 miles of the Pease Air National Guard Base. These other alternatives were considered not feasible to implement the Proposed Action and were therefore dismissed from further analysis.

### **3.0 FACTORS CONSIDERED IN DETERMINING THAT AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT IS NOT REQUIRED**

The EA, which is incorporated by reference into this Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI), identified and examined potential effects of the alternatives. The EA evaluated 12 resource areas and areas of environmental and socioeconomic concern: land use, aesthetic and visual resources, air quality, noise, geology and soils, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, socioeconomics, transportation, utilities, and hazardous and toxic substances.

The EA determined that implementation of the proposed realignment actions would not have any significant adverse effects or impacts on any of the environmental or related resource areas at the Preferred Alternative site or on areas surrounding the site. All of the resource areas evaluated resulted in a No Effect or a No Significant Effect determination.

None of the predicted effects of the proposed realignment actions would result in significant impacts; therefore, mitigation is not required, and implementation of the Proposed Action will not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement. Therefore, preparation of a FNSI is appropriate. The following paragraphs provide a summary of the potential impacts, permitting, and project design features for the Preferred Alternative.

Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would result in negligible impacts to land use and aesthetics and visual resources, minor short-term adverse impacts to air quality from construction, and negligible impacts to air quality from operation of building heating units and water heaters, temporary construction-related noise, negligible noise disturbance during operation, minor alteration of soils, negligible impacts to water resources during construction and operation, negligible adverse impacts on common flora and fauna, negligible adverse impacts to wetlands, minor short-term impacts to traffic during construction and negligible impacts to traffic from operation, minor impacts on utilities during construction and no impacts on utilities during operation, negligible impacts on hazardous/toxic materials, and minor generation of construction-related waste. None of these impacts are considered to be significant.

Construction of the Preferred Alternative would require an Alteration of Terrain permit from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES), a Clean Water Act (CWA) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System construction general permit issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a CWA Section 404 permit for discharge of dredge or fill material into wetlands issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a New Hampshire State Wetland Permit issued by the NHDES, and a CWA Section 401 water quality certification issued by NHDES. These permits would be

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<sup>2</sup> The Preferred Alternative site initially consisted of 10.6 acres and included two parcels, which are fully evaluated in this EA. However, the U.S. Army is now acquiring only the 6-acre parcel for construction of this project and the remaining 4.6-acre parcel will not be used.

obtained in advance of construction and work would comply with all conditions on those permits. In addition, the USAR would implement appropriate post-construction stormwater controls consistent with the New Hampshire Stormwater Manual and with *Technical Guidance on Implementing the Stormwater Runoff Requirements for Federal Projects under Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act* to ensure that the post-construction runoff rates do not exceed pre-construction runoff rates and to ensure compliance with the Energy Independence and Security Act. Implementation of appropriate construction and post-construction stormwater best management practices (BMPs) also would prevent the Preferred Alternative from contributing further to the degradation of two surface waters within 1 mile of the Preferred Alternative site that are listed as impaired by NHDES.

No mitigation would be required to reduce impacts to less than significant. Project design and site selection would minimize and avoid impacts to the extent practicable. Appropriate design features and BMPs, as described in the EA, would be implemented to minimize the potential for impacts.

During construction, BMPs that may be implemented to control fugitive dust generation would include, but not be limited to, mulching, wetting exposed dry soils, and prompt reestablishment of vegetative cover. BMPs that would be implemented to stabilize soils and reduce erosion from stormwater would include, but not be limited to, silt fencing, sediment traps, and prompt stabilization and revegetation of disturbed areas.

Post-construction stormwater controls may include, but would not be limited to, construction of a retention or detention area, use of infiltration areas, and minimizing the amount of new impervious cover through appropriate landscaping.

None of the Proposed Action would take place on any known archaeological sites. However, deeply buried sites often remain undetected during the archaeological survey process and are exposed only during construction or project activities. Should any significant or potentially significant historic or archeological artifacts be discovered during construction, all activities would halt in the immediate area. The U.S. Army Reserve is consulting with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and other parties to implement appropriate follow-on actions, as needed.

#### 4.0 PUBLIC COMMENT

Interested parties were invited to review and comment on the EA and Draft FNSI from October 5, 2010 through November 4, 2010. A Notice of Availability was published on October 5, 2010 in the *Portsmouth Herald* and the *Exeter News-Letter*. On October 22, 2010 a second Notice of Availability was published in these newspapers extending the public comment period through November 20, 2010.

The U.S. Army received two comments on the action during the review and comment period. These letters are included as Appendix L of the EA. An adjoining property owner requested the Army extend the paving of the proposed facility's service road across his property to connect to an existing paved portion of the service road. The Army Reserve has no need to pave the service road the additional distance and will only pave the service road from West Road to the entry way into the Army Reserve parking lot.

The City of Portsmouth raised issues concerning the site selection process, the potential loss of tax revenue, and the opinion the facility did not fit into the City of Portsmouth land use development plans for Lafayette Road. The Army's objective site selection process that led to the three site alternatives that are evaluated in the EA is described in Section 3.0 of the EA and includes a discussion of why other sites were not further assessed. The preferred site's selection involved a number of factors that are outlined in the EA and its selection does not alter the determination of a Finding of No Significant Impact for the Federal action.

While the federal government owned facility would not be subject to local taxation, the amount would not pose a significant impact to the City of Portsmouth given the size of the property to be purchased. In addition, the City of Portsmouth will receive the Paul Doble Army Reserve Center for redevelopment.

The preferred site's land use is part of an industrial district and designated as office research. It is surrounded by commercial and industrial development, and some residential housing. The AFRC is compatible with this purpose and should not inhibit development in surrounding areas. The Army will coordinate with the community to address any issues if they arise.

The City of Portsmouth also expressed a concern over the EA's evaluation of 10.6 acres for the AFRC and the Army's intent to only purchase a portion of this area evaluated. In the site development plan for the property, the Army determined that this entire acreage is not required to meet the Army's needs. Under NEPA and the planning process, the evaluation of an area for the potential resource-related environmental impacts associated with a federal action does not require the federal government to purchase the entire area.

The U.S. Army sent a coordination letter for the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 1, and Alternative 2 sites dated February 25, 2010 to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The letter requested information on federally listed or proposed threatened and endangered flora or fauna and any concerns the USFWS might have. To date, no response has been received.

The New Hampshire Natural Heritage Bureau (NHNHB) was contacted by letter dated February 25, 2010. The U.S. Army requested available information for the preferred and alternative sites. The NHNHB database was searched on May 4, 2010 and records of four species (one plant and three animals) were identified within 1.5 miles of the Alternative 2 site. No occurrences of state or federal listed species were identified within 1.5 miles of the Preferred Alternative site or Alternative Site 1. Site investigations determined that no state or federal listed species occurred on any of the three considered sites.

The NH Department of Environmental Services was contacted by letter on February 25, 2010. Consultation letters were sent to the Wetlands Bureau, the Alteration of Terrain Bureau, the New Hampshire Coastal Program (NHCP), and the Waste Management Division requesting questions or concerns with the preferred and alternative sites. The NHCP concurred with the Army's Coastal Zone Consistency Determination dated December 28, 2010. The NHCP had no specific concerns but noted that development would likely require permits from the NHDES Wetlands Bureau and Alteration of Terrain Program. No other responses have been received regarding the initial scoping letters. The Army has initiated the permitting process with the NHDES and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New England District Regulatory Division with regard to development of the site and this permitting will be completed prior to initiation of construction.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was contacted by letter dated February 25, 2010. The letter requested that the NRCS provide any key information or concerns regarding the preferred and alternative sites. To date, no response has been received.

The U.S. Army sent a coordination letter to the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (NHDHR) in February 2010. In response to that letter, the NHDHR concurred with the Army's determination that a cultural resource survey would not be necessary if the Preferred Alternative was selected. However, the NHDHR did request a Phase 1B Study of Alternative Site 1 and 2. The U.S. Army forwarded a Final Phase 1B Study to NHDHR on October 28, 2010 and requested concurrence that a) if Alternative 1 was selected, no additional cultural resource investigations or coordination with NHDHR would be necessary, and b) if Alternative 2 was selected Phase II testing would be necessary and consultation would continue. In correspondence dated November 22, 2010, the NHDHR concurred with the U.S. Army's determinations on Alternative 1 & 2.

On February 25, 2010 the U.S. Army sent coordination letters describing the Proposed Action and the Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 sites to the Penobscot Nation, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head-Aquinnah, the Mohegan Tribal Council, and the Passamaquoddy Tribe. Responses from the Passamaquoddy Tribe and the Penobscot Nation did not raise any issues regarding the project. No other correspondence has been received from the tribes.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the determination of impacts identified in the EA, implementing the Proposed Action through the Preferred Alternative will have no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on the quality of the natural or human environment. Because no significant environmental impacts will result from implementation of the Proposed Action, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and will not be prepared.

Date: 5 JAN 2011

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. E. Cepeda', written over a horizontal line.

JOSE E. CEPEDA  
Colonel, U.S. Army Reserve  
Regional Engineer